

JOURNEY INTO LIGHT  
(Life of Hubert E. Smith)  
Radford, Ruby Lorraine

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HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**

IF AN accident had not deprived Hubert Elhaunon Smith of sight at 16 he would probably today be a little-known farmer on the Carolina hills, while thousands of blind people, whom he has led into light, might still be walking in spiritual and mental darkness. In recognition of his lifetime of service for the blind, Mr. Smith was recently honored by the Lions clubs of Georgia, and awarded a gold loving cup for being the most outstanding blind person of the state. Walter G. Holmes, who did so much for the blind, called Hubert Smith the nation's most resourceful blind man.

That quality of resourcefulness, coupled with his complete selflessness, has turned a life that would have been ruined for many younger souls, into a path of consecrated service to others handicapped as he is. Only handicapped is not a word one would ever associate with Hubert Smith.

"If my blindness was the only thing I had to worry about I would indeed be free of problems," he remarked

to me one day.

His courageous philosophy of life has been evolved through almost 40 years of struggle and development since he became blind.

"I have an unyielding faith in the power of prayer," he said, "tempered by a home-grown knowledge of man's ignorance of what Divine gifts are best for him in the end. I find myself spending a lot of time thanking the Lord for not answering my prayers of yesteryears."

One of his earliest ambitions was to be a farmer on his grandfather's plantation, a heritage that has been passed down through the family since King George III made the original grant to the historic Hammond family of Revolutionary fame at the dawn of the 18th Century. Young Hubert loved farming better than school, and the rolling hills a few miles from Augusta, Ga., on the Carolina side of the Savannah River, seemed a paradise to the care-free boy.

In the spring of 1913 he won a coveted award offered

Walter McDonald (left), chairman of the Georgia Public Service Commission, presents Hubert E. Smith, president and founder of Ways and Means for the Blind, Inc., with a loving cup, the annual award of the Lions Club of Georgia to the outstanding blind person in the state.

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# Journey into Light

By Ruby Lorraine Radford

*In the process of gaining his independence, a blind Georgian has helped hundreds of blind and handicapped persons find security.*

by *The Augusta Chronicle*, and was among a group of 30 boys who went to Washington to see Woodrow Wilson inaugurated. As he feasted his eyes upon the great people and the magnificent buildings of the nation's capital, he little dreamed this one sight-seeing trip would become a most treasured memory of his sightless years.

About two weeks later Hubert was sitting on the Savannah River bank fishing, when he had a very peculiar experience. He was a little hesitant about telling this, but finally did for the first time.

"Accounts of supernatural happenings are more frequent than believed, and even less understood," he said. "A pair of spectacle frames dangling motionless in the sky aroused only a mild interest in a lad of 16 as he spent the day fishing on the banks of the Savannah. In less than 24 hours an accidental gunshot wound ushered me into service as a soldier of the dark."

For a long time after the accident he was too dazed to bring order out of the chaos of his life. The following fall he entered the Cedar Spring School for the Deaf and Blind near Spartanburg, South Carolina. But homesickness and loneliness gnawed at him. His fingers, toughened by farm work, were insensitive to the Braille writing he was trying to learn to read. So when they let him go home for the Christmas holidays his indulgent family didn't try to make him return.

By the following fall, however, the confused and

Latin America:

# Instituto Allende



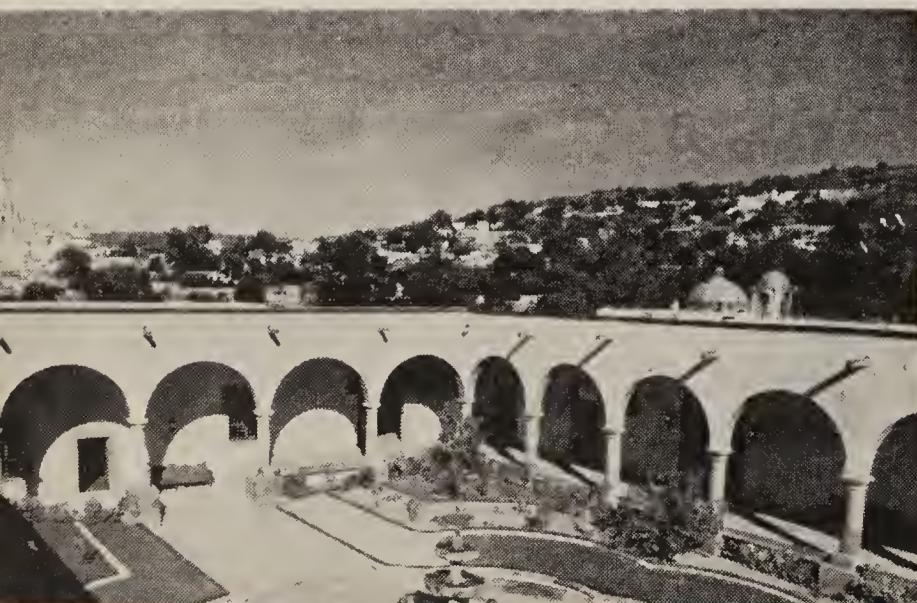
One of Instituto Allende's patios opens on a panorama of San Miguel rising to the north.

A rather unique international school, Instituto Allende, thrives in the little Mexican town of San Miguel de Allende. Sponsoring a program of international cultural relations based on work in arts and crafts, the Instituto attracts, each year, several hundred Americans who travel to San Miguel to study painting, sculpture, woodcarving, history of art, lithography, photography, silversmithing, textile design, weaving, ceramics, Spanish, and to learn to appreciate something of Mexican life and customs.

Instituto Allende likes to boast of its affiliations with the San Miguel Allende Lions club. Lions serve on its board of directors. Stirling Dickinson, only American member of the club, is Instituto's director of fine arts. Famous physician and surgeon, Lion Francisco Olsina, teaches artistic anatomy and Spanish. Lion President Leobino Zavala lectures on Mexican history. And Lions Vidal Flores, Raul Garcia, and Ramon Zavala own hotels which house many of Instituto's students.

Extra-curricular activities frequently tie in with those of the Lions. The two organizations mutually sponsor dances for local benefits, and the Instituto tries to cooperate in any way possible toward civic improvements.

The terraced lawn of the main patio centers around a lovely old fountain.



Fiesta dancers frequently appear at Instituto.

Students discover interesting variations in lithographic technique.



almost hopeless boy realized he must prepare himself for some work in life, so returned to the school near Spartanburg. Again he was desperately homesick for his family and the boy friends who took him to the plantation mill pond for fishing and swimming. Again he went home at Christmas and this time he didn't return.

Not long after that his frustrated life found direction when a magazine in Braille came into his hands. Through sheer will power he had forced his fingers to conquer the difficult task of learning Braille. And a typewriter that had been given him by his cousin Jimmy was learning to respond to his touch.

The *Matilda Ziegler Magazine for the Blind* brought hope and a dawning light to the dark despair of a young man's heart. This magazine had come into being through the selfless efforts of the late Walter G. Holmes. While visiting in New York, Holmes read in the papers of the huge sums given for various charities, but there was no mention of help for the blind, for whom Mr. Holmes was especially concerned because he had a blind brother. He wrote a letter to the newspaper, expressing his regret that the blind had apparently been forgotten. As a result of this letter, Mrs. Matilda Ziegler gave a half million dollars to establish a free monthly Braille magazine. Through the inspiration of this magazine Hubert Smith first began to emerge from his inner darkness and start on his journey toward the light.

By this time America had been plunged into World War I, and Camp Hancock sprawled over the hill west of Augusta, only a few miles from the old farm on the Martintown Road. Hubert saw here his opportunity. He established a wholesale dairy business, supplying milk to the camp. He milked 25 cows a day, and fed over 100. For a while his business thrived, then the war was over, the camp abandoned, and the market faded out.

He then went to Columbia, S.C., where he joined The Association of the Blind, an institution where people are trained according to their preference or talents, in mattress-making, furniture repair, cane work, and upholstery. Here it was that Hubert began to find himself and his place in the scheme of things. Here it was also that he met the girl he was later to marry, Jewell McManus, who was not only blind, but partially deaf.

The students of the school were given their board, training, and a dollar-and-a-half a week. Out of this small sum Hubert finally saved \$100. While in the Association he advanced rapidly and was able to render much assistance in the work. He was learning, now, the joy of helping others help themselves.

After serving a 10-year apprenticeship in this workshop for the blind, Hubert Smith came to Augusta, Ga., in 1928 with his small savings and opened an office, over the door of which was the sign, "Ways and Means for the Blind." These words were later to become the sign and symbol of the life and work of this selfless man.

Then one day a representative of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation came in to ask if he would undertake to train the blind in the crafts he had already learned. Hubert Smith joyfully agreed to cooperate.

A little workshop with a dirt floor was opened in an alley off Broad Street with one trainee. But soon the good news spread and others came for six months of free training. The obstacles were many, however, in those early days. One morning the young man went to his shop to find that his partner had gone off with the truck and mattress-making machine to set up business in another city. The workshop couldn't function without the mattress machine and the truck for deliveries. Also, winter was approaching, and as there was no way to heat the shop they were in desperate need of better quarters.

By this time Hubert was married, so he talked his problems over with his wife.

"Let's go to Uncle Charlie," Jewell suggested, thinking at once of Mr. Charlie Phinizy, president of the Georgia Railroad Bank and Trust Company.

"Uncle Charlie," as he is affectionately called by his close friends, heard their story with sympathy and understanding. But better still, he had a solution.

There was an old building behind the bank that was part of its property. "It's yours to use for your work as long as we own it," Mr. Phinizy told the Smiths generously.

A mattress-making machine was borrowed from a friend in Savannah, so the workshop moved into the upstairs quarters behind the bank. It soon became known as "The Little Shop with the Big Ideas." For seven years the workshop grew and expanded until it had to seek even larger quarters on Reynolds Street. Blind people were now coming from 11 states to be trained for six months, free of cost. After their apprenticeship, the blind returned to their own communities to set up business for themselves.

Hubert Smith never asked any subsidy to carry on his work, using returns from his thriving business to finance the service. "Ways & Means for the Blind" was incorporated in 1933 as an eleemosynary corporation. Included in this were several pieces of real estate, all the shop equipment, and other valuables.

In the meantime, a profitable brokerage and merchandising business had sprung from a very humble beginning. One night Hubert Smith was aroused about eleven o'clock by a phone call from Athens, Ga., requesting a dollar's worth of mattress needles for a shop there. The ever-resourceful Hubert conceived the idea of how he could expand his income for the work to which he was dedicating his life.

A room in the building was set aside for this new phase of the work. There was little surplus with which to begin operation. But Hubert Smith was undaunted. Every day he and a guide would go to a local textile mill and haul through the streets on their shoulders ticking to fill orders that had come in, and shipments of goods were hauled to the post office on a small hand truck.

That was the beginning of his jobbers supply house, dealing in upholstery, ticking, mattress supplies, caning, etc., which now serves the entire nation. "Way & Means for the Blind" is a member of the local and national Chambers of Commerce, and is highly recommended by Dunn & Bradstreet.

Hubert Smith has long since renounced for personal gain all profits from his thriving business. He turns back into the treasury of the corporation all earnings except actual living expenses.

Three sons have been born to the Smiths. The first died at five months. In her great sorrow, Jewell could not stay at home, so went every day to the shop with her husband. Trying to forget her loss, she learned to do the fine cane work at which her sensitive fingers are still so deft, even though there is no longer an urgent need for the money she once earned by this work.

They have been blessed with two other sons; Francis and Hubert, fine helpful boys. Francis is at the University of Georgia, studying pharmacy, while Hubert will soon finish at Carlisle Military School.

Mr. Smith recently found a new channel through which to render his service to the blind. Since he had renounced all profits for personal gain, this remarkably resourceful man established a foundation, subsidiary to Ways & Means, known as the Walter G. Holmes Foundation, honoring his old friend and faithful worker for the blind. Through this foundation, Ways & Means for the Blind Service Bonds are administered free of all overhead cost. The principle of these bonds forms a perpetual trust, which is never to be spent, but the interest at two per cent is to be used each year for specific benefits for

the blind. To date a total of \$179,700 has been invested in these bonds.

So far there are 14 bonds, each serving a definite purpose. Bond No. 2, for instance, is for \$15,000. Its interest annually provides a down payment on a home for some blind Negro in the South. The balance of the cost of the home is carried over a period of 100 months, interest free. A \$5,000 bond brings enough interest to supply two blind people each year with a complete copy of the Bible in Braille. Interest on another bond supplies sets of Reader's Digest on records for the use of 10 blind people each year.

Ernestine Archer, of Piney Woods, Mississippi, can speak gratefully of what these bonds have done for her. Though Ernestine was born blind, she managed to educate herself and opened a school for the blind. Her income was dependent upon the number of children in the school. When it fell as low as \$40 a month, she was in danger of losing the little white cottage where she lived with her mother. She asked the Walter G. Holmes Foundation for assistance. Mr. Smith had the Canton Lions club investigate the case, and it recommended her for assistance. So, through the interest on Bond No. 2, Ernestine was able to save her home for her mother and herself.

Bond No. 10 is dedicated to every boy and his dog. This bond provides \$200 annually for a blind person while making adjustment to his guide dog. Three awards have already been made from this fund. The first went to Christine Backe of Salem, Oregon, the second to Lena Barbera of New York City, and the last to Mrs. Rosa Lee Cox Washington of Griffin, Ga.

Though these aids to the blind are generous indeed, they meet only a small part of the urgent needs for these most grievously afflicted of all people. It is estimated that two per cent of the nation's population is blind, and

this rate will probably go up with the increasing longevity, and the rising hazards of industrial employment. There are far more requests for down payments on homes for the blind than can possibly be met. Two other services sorely needed just now are for typewriters and radios for the blind. A \$3,000 bond would bring sufficient interest to provide a typewriter or a radio for one blind person each year.

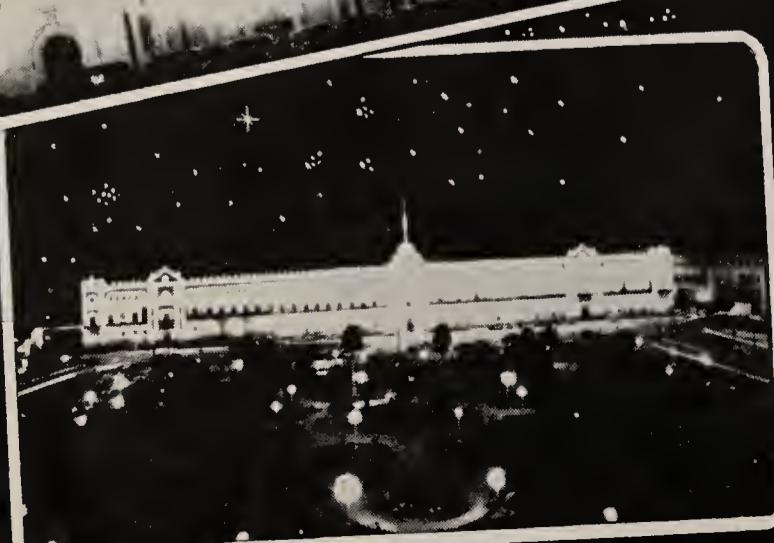
Like many another pioneering endeavor into the fields of human service, the Smithsonian Plan, as it is now known to many, is on its way over the hurdles to sympathetic understanding by the public, which is so essential to the building of any great American institution. Duly incorporated under the laws of South Carolina, and accorded all the prerogatives of a charitable institution, having no stockholders or paid executives, Ways & Means for the Blind, Inc., opens the door of opportunity to any who might wish to befriend the blind by establishing a living memorial to a loved one. Now in its third edition, an attention-compelling little booklet called "Footprints" tells a unique story of the birth and accomplishments of this determined effort to bring a larger share of happiness to the blind of this gracious land. A copy of "Footprints" will be sent free to anyone on request.

And so Hubert E. Smith has traveled a long way up the path of service to bring light and hope and opportunity to his fellow men, and in travelling, his handicap has been entirely surmounted and his own life enriched by the love and gratitude of all to whom he has ministered.

"After all," he said reverently, "the best policy is to put your shoulder to the wheel, and push yourself to your knees while your heart says, 'Dear Lord, give me strength my part to do, and faith the rest to leave to you'."

THE END

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